



March 21, 2017

We Need Vehicle Emission Testing Facilities in Chicago

The attack on the poor continues and comes from every direction. We have received many calls to our office about the lack of vehicle emission facilities in Chicago. Senior citizens have called to express how the closures have directly impacted their lives. Most recently, Wanda Hopkins from SACC called to express major concerns about the crisis for the senior citizens on the West Side. We agreed to work together to get the word out to fight for more accommodations for the West Side.

People who decide to buy a new car don't have to worry about getting their car tested for pollution. But what about struggling families that can't afford to buy a new car, or instead use their resources to pay for their everyday needs.

In a letter sent October 25, 2016, to the Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, I joined an effort lead by Reps. Ann Williams and Barbara Flynn Currie expressing major concerns about the closures of the vehicle emissions facilities.

The letter states:

As representatives of the City of Chicago, we are writing today to call for a vehicle emissions testing site to be placed in the city. We understand that in an attempt to reduce costs, the Illinois EPA has signed a new contract that will result in several vehicle emissions facilities closing. While we appreciate the Agency's effort to increase efficiencies, the closure of all sites in Chicago will negatively impact millions of city residents.

We have heard from numerous constituents as to how these closures will create an undue burden in their lives and present a serious obstacle to comply with emission testing statutory requirements. The Illinois EPA's own study concluded that for residents of Chicago, many will drive on average an additional four miles. This is a significant change that will add to vehicle emissions, **in direct contrast to the purpose of the Agency's directive.**

The signed members below therefore urge the Agency to renegotiate this contract and to add a minimum of one testing station in Chicago, preferably more, to ensure access for our residents. We welcome any conversation on this matter, and hope that appropriate remedial action will be taken.

The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 requires emissions testing programs in large, metropolitan areas which do not meet certain federal air quality standards. In Illinois, though significant progress has been made, levels of air pollution in Chicago and Metro-East St. Louis areas still exceed these standards. Most 1996 and

newer gasoline-powered passenger vehicles are subject to testing after they are four years old. Specified 2007 model year and newer heavy duty trucks are also subject to testing.

Vehicles begin testing when the vehicle is four years old; also, even model year vehicles are tested in even years while odd model year vehicles are tested in odd years. For example, in 2016, Illinois EPA began testing 2012 vehicles for the first time, and in 2017, the Agency will begin testing 2013 vehicles. An estimated 1.9 – 2.1 million vehicles are tested each year.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) Acting Director Alec Messina announced the changes to the Agency's Vehicle Emissions Testing Program, which will offer more efficient and less expensive tests. The new testing contract also includes numerous added motorist conveniences including flexible scheduling and expanded hours on Saturdays.


"The Illinois EPA is streamlining the Vehicle Emissions Testing Program as a result of a new testing contract that will take effect on November 1, 2016," said Acting Director Messina. "The new network will include changes to some testing locations while also providing added convenience for motorists including a second test position in each lane at most centralized stations, decreasing wait times significantly."

The new network will provide a core system of 10 high capacity, two-position On-Board Diagnostic (OBD) testing facilities (*except Schaumburg and Swansea). Inspection and Repair (I&R) facilities will supplement the network and will not require appointments for an emissions test. In the Chicago area, there will be 10 centralized emissions testing stations and six I&R facilities. In the Metro-East St. Louis area, there will be two centralized emissions testing stations and three I&R facilities.

"In addition to more efficient and less expensive tests, the new contract will save Illinois taxpayers at least \$11 million each year, and nearly \$100 million over the life of the contract," added Messina.

We are all for efficiency and saving money, but the EPA also needs to take into account the needs of the people they are serving, especially in the city of Chicago. We need vehicle testing facilities in Chicago – after all, the farther we drive, the more pollution is generated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Shawn K. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District